

## Asner blasts US policy

By TOBY SANGER

Ed Asner and Blase Bonpane harshly criticized United States military involvement in Central America yesterday and called for a major change in American attitudes towards Nicaragua.

Bonpane is a former priest who now works as director of the Office of the Americas, a California-based educational organization.

Asner is best known for his acting role as Lou Grant in the TV series "The Mary Tyler Moore Show". Like US president Ronald Reagan, he is a former president of the Screen Actors Guild of America and is also married to a woman named Nancy. Both are also deeply concerned about US involvement in Central America.

But that's where the similarities end.

In a press conference yesterday at Dalhousie, Asner said Reagan's policy towards Nicaragua is designed to create a paranoia of external enemies to divert attention from US domestic problems.

"We cannot concentrate too strongly on the foreign enemy of the Soviet Union or else we would get to the bomb-dropping stage," said Asner. "So you create little

minions around the world."

"To have a 'socialist menace' on the mainland is too much. It must be stamped out."

"The Nicaraguan people and their revolution have not been well represented in the United States," added Bonpane.

"There is no (legal) justification for attacking Nicaragua," said Bonpane. "We have no grievance against Nicaragua, but we're attacking them, killing them, raping their women."

According to Bonpane, it would take little more than "a contrivance" for the Reagan administration to justify a military invasion.

Even in the wake of the Iran arms scandal — "Gippergate", Asner call it — the threat still exists. The Reagan administration's support for the contras, said Asner, "is like a snake with its head cut off. Its mouth is still venomous and its body is still writhing."

Instead of being an enemy, Asner said, Nicaragua's moderate government provides the US with an opportunity to accept diversity. "Nicaragua offers us a phenomenal opening of the door... to the socialist countries of the world. How much better it would

be if (the United States and the Soviet Union) just did business with each other. Nicaragua would just love to do business with the United States."

Bonpane and Asner both say they see a shift in the American public's views towards Central America, despite little support from the media.

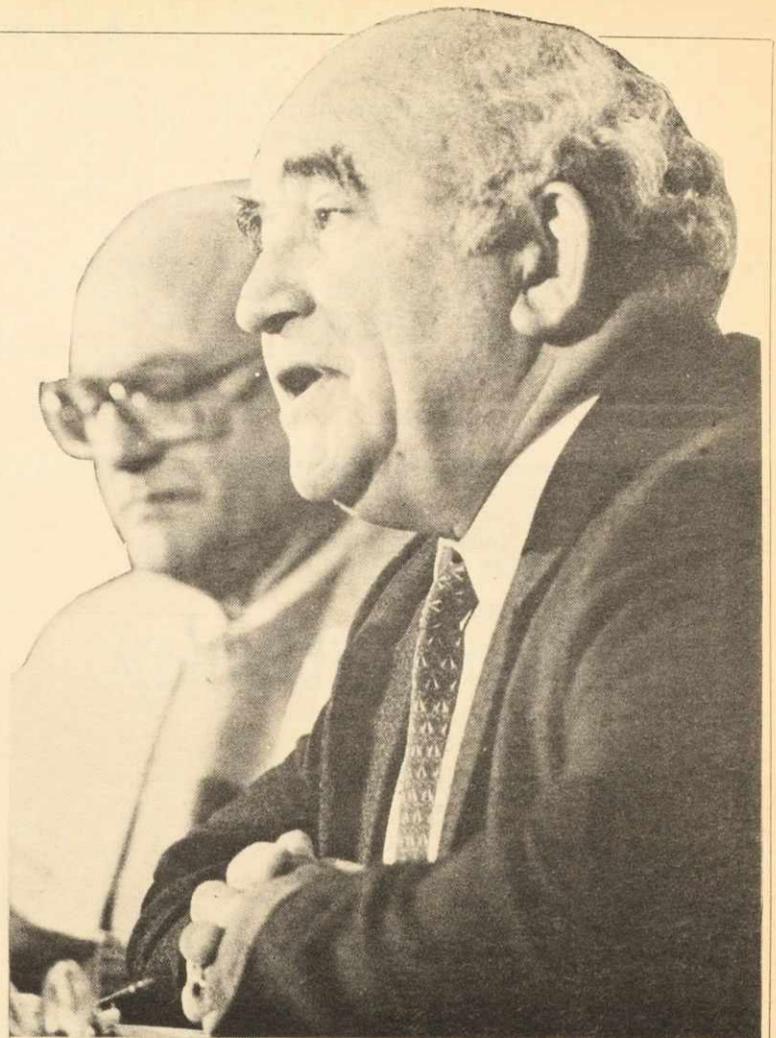
Citing a poll showing 66 per cent of Americans opposed to US military involvement in Nicaragua, they praised the efforts of people in unions and churches who are aiding Central American refugees.

Asner says 250,000 people are expected to march in Washington on April 25 to protest US policies in Central America.

He is also critical of the recent shift in Canadian policy.

Asner said he was "very surprised and dismayed" about the Canadian government's change in its attitude towards refugees and said, "I would hope that the Canadian people change the government's attitude regarding refugees."

Bonpane and Asner are in Halifax to attend an international conference on "Central America in Crisis" at Dalhousie and Saint Mary's until Saturday.



"Hello from Hollywood" — actor and activist Ed Asner and Blase Bonpane (background) spoke with an enthusiastic crowd of over 400 in a political love-in at the SUB Wednesday night about U.S. crimes in Central America. Photo by Mark Piesanen/Dal Photo.

## Professor quits over funding cuts

By KATHY O'BRIEN

The head of Dalhousie University's physiology and biophysics department has resigned his position to protest funding cuts to his department.

Dr. Kurt Ruf, who will remain on staff as professor, resigned after he was told to cut eight per cent from the department's budget. "I didn't feel I could administer properly" under such constricted conditions, he says.

A total of 25 per cent has been cut from the department's budget since 1980, says Ruf. During that same time period "we have lost one-quarter of our academic manpower and several qualified technicians through attrition."

Ruf says the department of physiology recently lost a specialist in respiratory medicine who will not be replaced because of Dalhousie's hiring freeze.

"The morale in the department is at an all time low."

Although Dal's physiology department has an "international reputation" in research, faculty have recently had to spend much of their time teaching students instead of performing research, says Ruf.

Because of the shortage of faculty Ruf says the department is "not always qualified to teach in certain areas."

"The students are being short-changed," says Ruf. He says more than 200 students are enrolled in classes which should be limited to 50 students.

As well, Ruf says the teaching lab equipment is "totally obsolete." This makes it hard to find spare parts and the equipment is

fears the technician who maintains the equipment will not be replaced when he retires shortly.

Ruf also says faculty and staff are not being paid adequately. Ruf lost \$20,000 a year in salary when he left a research co-ordinator's position at McGill University to head up Dal's physiology department in 1983.

"If I get a job offer from another university I'm going," says Ruf. "My bags are packed."

Ruf doesn't blame the university administration for making budget cuts, however.

"The administration is powerless," he says. "Dalhousie can't muddle through anymore. It has to put its books in order."

Ruf is angry that the provincial government provides no funding for post-secondary education and spends federal money earmarked for universities on other expenses.

Compared to universities in other provinces "Dalhousie is in a particularly tight spot." At other universities one-third of research money comes from the provincial government, says Ruf. In Nova Scotia the government gives little or no money for research.

"The provincial government should get its priorities in order," says Ruf. "It must realize that the delivery of health care is in jeopardy in this province and that in the end there will be no medical school at Dalhousie."

Officials from the provincial departments of Health and Education were unavailable for comment, as was the Dean of Dalhousie Medical School.

## Students fail professor

By KATHY O'BRIEN & GEOFF STONE

Two Dalhousie students have stopped attending a sociology class because they think the professor has a negative attitude towards blacks.

One of the students, who asked not to be identified, says the professor, Dr. John Benoit, has made statements in class such as "Blacks have a different view of deviance."

She says the professor presents statistics about deviant behaviour among blacks — such as black males having the highest crime rates in the USA — without explanations.

The statistics Benoit uses in class are often from the 1950s and 1960, not up-to-date information, says the student. While most of the material taught in class is based on the textbook, *Deviant Behaviour*, the student and others think that this information should be thoroughly explained and put into context.

Chair of the sociology department, Don Clairmont, says he finds it hard to believe that Benoit

didn't discuss his statistics in terms of socio-economics. "I don't know how this could have happened."

The student thinks that the professor may be passing on a negative attitude towards blacks to the 142 student in his course on deviance and social control.

"I hate going to the man's class," she says.

Benoit says he was not aware of the complaints. "It's news to me."

Any relation of deviance to blacks is a minimal part of the course, says Benoit. He defends using statistics from the 1950s and 1960s because, "some studies are classic studies."

Another black student says she has also experienced racism at Dalhousie.

She says that professors mark black students fairly, but she notes that remarks, mainly from students, such as "hey girl" or "you people are so emotional," have made her consider changing universities. "But I don't think it would be any better elsewhere," she says.

The student is unhappy that

professors don't criticize students who make racist comments. "Some students have gone through four years of university and their attitude has not changed." One student came up to her and said: "Gee I never met a nigger before I came here."

The students say that if black students act unconfident and backwards, professors go out of their way to help them through the system. Professors are uncomfortable around blacks who are confident and challenge what they say, she says.

"I don't know if blacks are having a major problem getting through university because of racism, but I think some blacks go through in total misery."

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